

THESIS REPORT

MUNICIPAL CENTER, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

SUBMITTED FOR

MASTERS DEGREE

SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

AUGUST 11, 1958

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COURT AND RECORDS BUILDINGMUNICIPAL CENTER, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

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ABSTRACT

MUNICIPAL CENTER - PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

ARTHUR ROBERT KLAESON, JR.

Submitted to the Department of Architectura and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, on August 11, 1958 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Master of Architecture.

The preliminary design, enclosed in this report, is a broad study for a municipal center containing a new major street pattern and public park within the existing downtown area of the city. The purpose of this design was to examine the effects this proposal has on the physical characteristics and the revitalization of this area bordering the existing downtown core of the city.

The selection for a detailed study of the Court and Records building, contained within the complex, is to examine the role of contemporary architecture in the design of a monumental structure.

41 Haliburton Road
Rumford 16, Rhode Island
August 11, 1958

Pietro Belluschi, Dean
School of Architecture and Planning
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge 39, Massachusetts

Dear Dean Belluschi:

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree, Master of Architecture, I herewith
submit my Thesis entitled "MUNICIPAL CENTER, Provi-
dence, Rhode Island.

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur Robert Klaeson, Jr. *U*

History

A city is a remarkably complex, living organism. Like all living things, a city grows on a general pattern common to the genus of cities and in a specific pattern related to its species as an industrial community, a bedroom town, a great port, a commercial center or a boom town in the oil fields.

In any city, there is a ceaseless change. It may be spectacular and swift as in the construction of a modern expressway through a city or of a great housing project on a slum site.

Like all living things, a city is susceptible to influence from factors over which it has no control. And as with living things, it is frequently difficult to measure the extent and direction of a growth, the amount of decay, the volume of growth. In the lifetime of one man, a city may undergo a complete change of nature, and even a function.

Providence is such a city. However, it is unique in the fact that it changed its function in the relatively short span of 20 years. It has shifted from primarily a textile industry to one of vast jewelry, machine tool precision instruments and electronic industries.

The supply of skilled labor left dormant by the loss of the textile industry was gradually assimilated by these new industries and the constant growing of Quonset Naval Depot

as a vital link in the defense of the eastern seaboard.

Other factors which prove the growth of the metropolitan community other than population increases are an increase of 42% in air passengers and freight to and from Providence since 1955; the establishment of the port of Providence as the northern terminus of Meccian Trucking Co. truck barges serving all of New England from the south; the construction of a \$100 million dollar oil refinery 13 from Providence and the immeasurable increase of the city as a major cultural center containing Brown University, Rhode Island School of Design, R. I. College of Education, Bryant College and smaller schools of technological training.

Unfortunately, the condition of office space, stores, housing, shops, entertainment, and vehicular patterns have not progressed with this growth.

Providence lacks sufficient office building rental space, small specialty shops, restaurants, consolidated city, state, and federal offices, hotel rooms and exhibition space, which would guarantee an influx of sizable convention trade, a new department store, and adequate parking for an additional 4000 automobiles. This has forced people to carry on most of their community activities in the bedroom towns which surround the metropolitan area and has slowly driven the central business district into a relatively stagnant area. However, the downtown business district is still the pulsating heart of the surrounding communities and will and must, because of its nature,

become the center of activity again.

This then is the purpose of this preliminary study for a municipal center; to create a living complex which functions not only from morning to afternoon, five days a week, but a cultural complex which continues to serve the community during all hours of day and evening throughout the year.

The City

The original settlement of Providence was located on the steep hill east of the confluence of the Woonasquatucket and the Moshassuck Rivers. Here were located both the commercial and residential areas of the new settlement. This area has retained much of its early residential character and presently is the subject of a proposed Demonstration Grant for the preservation, restoration and renewal of historic areas. This area, today known as College Hill, abuts the Downtown Neighborhood on the east. The urban renewal program resulting from the College Hill Demonstration Project will provide not only preservation of historic buildings but also residences for workers and shoppers in close proximity to the Central Business District.

With the ensuing growth of the port and the consequent need for expansion there was a trend toward development of the open land across the river, to the west; an area which was unhampered by the steep slope of the original settlement. The development that took place on this open land was mostly of a mixed residential and commercial character similar to the original settlement. The cove has been filled in and the

commercial uses expanded and intensified till a commercial core was formed, surrounded on the south and west by a fringe of residential uses. Along the main thoroughfares of this fringe area the residential structures have been encroached upon by the increasing pressure for additional space for commercial and manufacturing uses. This encroachment has now spread through the entire area and a situation exists where a substantial number of structures house commercial or manufacturing uses on the ground floor while remaining residential in the upper floors. In some instances entire structures have been taken over by uses for which the structure was not originally designed. Most of the residential structures are used as multi-dwelling structures regardless of their initial design. The improper uses of these structures, which in a majority of cases are inadequate, have greatly aggravated the problems of the Downtown Neighborhood; being contributing factors to the present inadequate parking and circulation facilities, poor physical appearance of many structures and to inadequate housing and environmental conditions.

The completion of the freeway loop around the Downtown Neighborhood will isolate the residential uses of this area from the rest of the city. It is therefore imperative that plans, policies and programs be developed so that the area of mixed uses, commercial, manufacturing and residential, lying between the general commercial area and the freeway will not become an area of neglected and deteriorating structures to the

detriment of the entire city in general and the Downtown Neighborhood in particular.

Part of the fringe area of the Downtown Neighborhood is located in already designated Redevelopment Areas. With the completion of the freeway loop, isolating this fringe area from other residential areas, a unit is created which must be considered as a whole even though it has a commercial core and a dissimilar fringe. The need for a revitalization program of this area is recognized by the businessmen in the area. In March 1955 the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce formed a Downtown Business Coordinating Council for the purpose of remodeling and revitalizing the business district. The membership of the Council comprises a good representative cross section of the business interests in the downtown area. This council has financed a Customer Attitude Survey directed toward the Central Business District as a place to shop. It has also supported a Parking Validation Program in which the customer is given one hour free parking if a purchase of \$2 or more is made at a participating store and the customer has parked a car in a participating lot.

On September 20, 1956, the Downtown Business Coordinating Council held an open meeting, with a representative of the Victor Gruen Associates presenting the Fort Worth Plan as the program feature. The purpose of this meeting was to arouse public interest and to stress the need for cooperation among

all concerned in the remodeling and revitalization of the Downtown Neighborhood.

Evidence of the decline of the Central Business District is shown in the changes of land valuations. On June 15, 1956, the City Assessor announced the results of a recently completed city-wide land revaluation of the City of Providence, the first since 1946. Total land values in the City increased 24 per cent in the past ten years while the valuations in the Central Business District increased only 8 percent.

There has been little change in the structural scene of the Downtown Neighborhood for a number of years. It has been 29 years since the last major building was constructed in this area, this being a bank and office building. One office building is now being demolished to be replaced by another. Most of the changes in the structural scene have been demolitions, with the land area being utilized for off-street parking.

MAJOR DESIGN CRITERIA

A. The need of a stronger relationship between the city, state, and federal governments into a more intergrated unit.

B. The basic assumption is that the N.Y., N.H. & H. railroad will move from their present location in downtown Providence to a site strategically located with relation to the central city, and will be the basis to initiate this redevelopment.

This shift by the railroad will increase the existing area downtown core of the city by 42%.

C. The design of the municipal center as a unit which actively expresses the environment and culture of the city.

D. The reclaiming of the rivers as a usable and important design element.

E. The creation of a public park within the municipal center, not only as a place to play, but as an element which functions both aesthetically and economically.

F. The importance of landscape as an architectural element.

Requirements

For study purposes two main categories of use were established; public, and commercial.

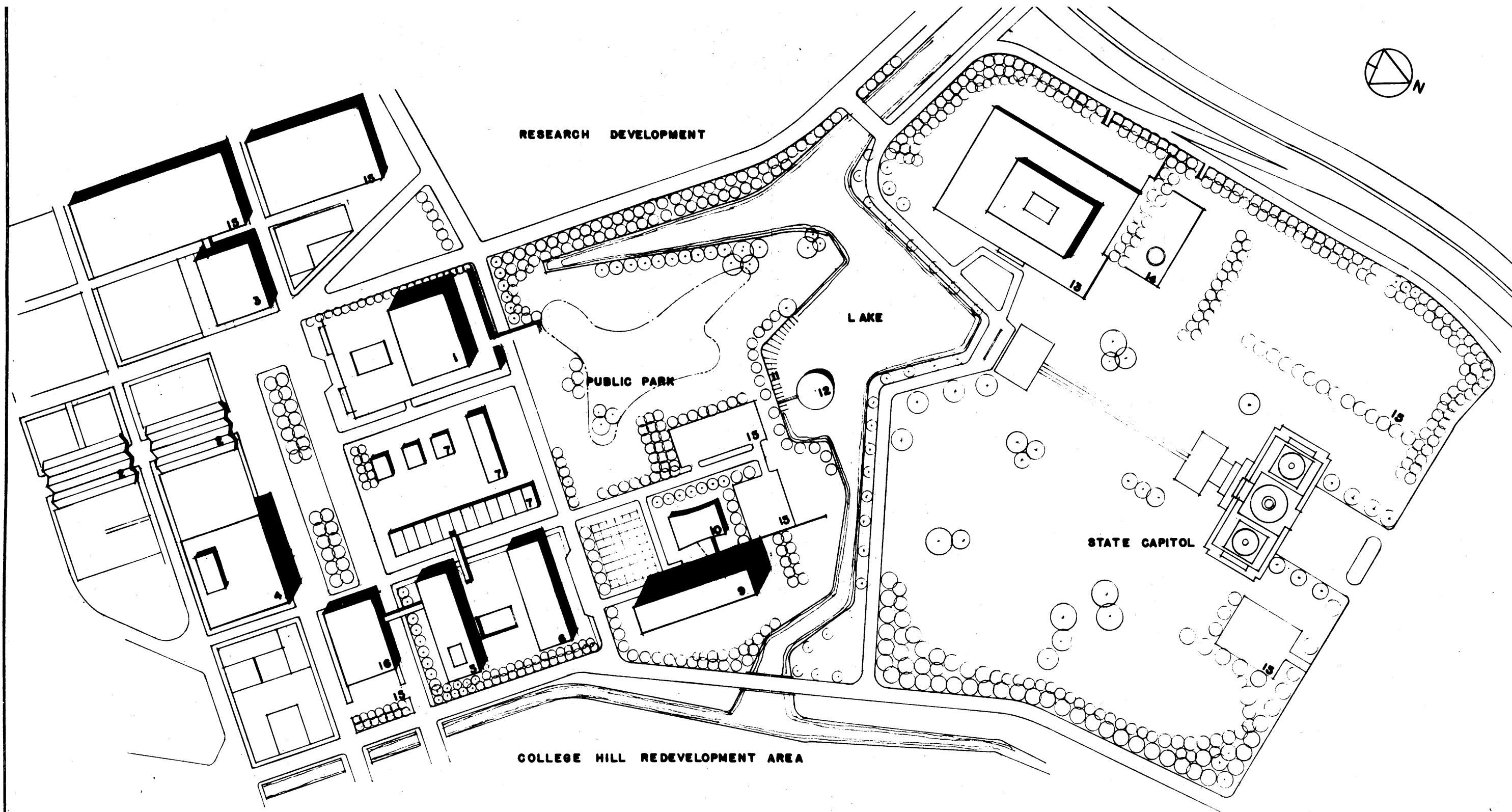
The following is a list of these spaces and their approximate square footage obtained from statistics compiled by the Providence City Plan Commission.

PUBLIC USES

A. Federal Office Building	145,000 sq. ft.
B. State Office Building	120,000 sq. ft.
C. Court and Record Building	90,000 sq. ft.
D. Tourist Information	15,000 sq. ft.
E. City Hall	120-150,000 sq. ft.
F. Health and Welfare Building	50,000 sq. ft.
G. Parking Facilities	4,000 cars
H. Convention Concert-Exhibition Hall	3,000 people
I. Outdoor Exhibition - Concert Area	4,000 people
J. Outdoor Theater	2,000 people
K. Transportation Center	6,000 sq. ft.

COMMERCIAL USES

A. Hotel	300 rooms
B. Commercial office space	250,000 sq. ft.
C. Department Store	75,000 sq. ft.
D. Market Shopping	not available
E. Specialty Shops	not available
F. Restaurants	not available



COURT AND RECORDS BUILDING
MUNICIPAL CENTER - PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

Juvenile delinquency is becoming the major problem for communities throughout the United States. To insure the future of the community adequate facilities must be provided to combat this disease and to study the problems which are inherent to it.

Providence, Rhode Island, is a community with a metropolitan population of 250,000 people which has an average proportion of delinquency. However, it has a rapidly growing concern about delinquency and the effect it is having on the younger members of the population who will someday be the leaders of the community.

Within the municipal center complex the building which is of prime importance in serving the future of the city is a new court and records building devoted entirely to the needs of the juvenile members of the community.

Present housing for facilities required to successfully combat delinquency are wholly inadequate and are operated in a deplorable and inefficient manner. With the rise of juvenile delinquency to proportions that are posing a menace to the well-being of the community the need for such a building is unquestionable.

Function

The function of this building is not solely that of a court which tries crimes perpetrated against the community, but has a preventive, corrective, and re-habilitation function use entirely for the combating of juvenile delinquency.

The major disadvantage of the present facilities is that the juvenile and the hardened criminal are often housed and tried within the same building. This present system is certainly a step towards a detrimental environment which may greatly hinder any preventative measures taken towards rehabilitating the individual to a useful member of his or her community.

Therefore, this structure must not only house court rooms, but extensive facilities for conselors who guide and shape the character of the juvenile into a useful citizen. It must contain medical and psychiatric devices for the treatment and study of delinquency, both before and after it becomes a case which can be handled only by court proceedings.

Due to the fact that prolonged delinquency can often be reduced more affectively by proper medical and psychiatric treatment these two functions are a necessity in a building of this type for a number of reasons i.e. children whose delinquency rate is the highest come from families of the lowest income group. These families cannot afford the expense of this clinical care, therefore, it will be supported by the city. It has been found by the court that for efficient administrative medical and court records must be stored in a consolidated area

adjacent to one another as a matter of expedience. These records must be housed within one structure and easily available to the legal staff of the court and legal counsel employed to defend the juvenile whose offenses require court proceedings.

Dormitory facilities are provided for juveniles whose clinical examinations require a longer period of time for proper analysis and whose environmental surroundings at home are deemed detrimental by the physician during this examination period. These dormitories are also provided to house juveniles during the period of a court trial.

Exhibition area must be included to display important court records together with historical city and state documents.

The civic leaders and the court administrators contend that the use of a part of this building for public display of official documents will arouse and attract the public interest towards this building and help them to familiarize themselves with its important function and contribution to the community.

Conclusion

The siting of this building within the complex became a major importance. It must be so located as to be readily seen from important vantage points throughout the municipal area. It must express a serene quality and a character indigenous with its surrounding environment. It is a building whose aesthetic qualities express its contribution to the future. It must gain monumentality through the scale of its landscaping, plazas and use of materials. It must be a structure which will function, not only during the week, but on weekends as well by using its plazas and landscape grounds for exhibitions, outdoor concerts and meditation.

But most of all the building must have an architectural quality or personality which will and must help it to perform its function.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

1.	Basement parking - 100 cars	30,000 sq. ft.		
2.	Mechanical	5,000 "	"	"
3.	Storage	2,000 "	"	"
4.	Lobby & Exhibition-Circulation	6,000 "	"	"
5.	Chief Justice	380 "	"	"
6.	2 Associate Justices	380 "	"	"
	A. Toilet	380 "	"	"
7.	Conference Room	380 "	"	"
8.	Waiting Room Receptionist.	380 "	"	"
9.	Secretarial Staff	240 "	"	"
10.	Juvenile Counseling			
	A. Girls waiting	384 "	"	"
	1 receptionist	80 "	"	"
	B. Boys waiting	384 "	"	"
	1 receptionist	80 "	"	"
	C. Counsel Rooms - 15	1200 "	"	"
	D. Storage	100 "	"	"
	E. Secretarial Staff	770 "	"	"
	F. Conference Room Staff	250 "	"	"
11.	Juvenile Probation			
	A. Chief Probation Officer	384 "	"	"
	1 waiting	384 "	"	"
	B. Secretarial Staff	1540 "	"	"
	C. Waiting Room	384 "	"	"
	1 receptionist	80 "	"	"
	D. 7 Probation offices	560 "	"	"

12. Community Education

A. Waiting Room	510 sq. ft.		
B. Meeting Room	576	"	"
C. Meeting Room	960	"	"
A Conference Room	250	"	"

2nd floor

Court Room	1,200 sq. ft.		
Jury Room	168	"	"
A. W.C.	30	"	"
Hearing Room	620	"	"
Hearing Room	420	"	"
Judge's Chambers	168	"	"
Assoc. Judge	168	"	"
Clerk of Court	2,240	"	"
Office	216	"	"
Waiting Room	220	"	"
Clerks Records	2,688	"	"
General Offices	1,644	"	"
Legal Department			
3 Private offices	450	"	"
General Office	1,920	"	"
Record Storage	8,000	"	"
Employee's Lounge	450	"	"
Cafeteria	1,600	"	"
Kitchen & Storage	300	"	"
Toilet Facilities	800	"	"

3rd Floor

Boys Dormitories	2,880	sq. ft.
Girls Dormitories	2,300	" "
Boys Detention	400	" "
Girls Detention	300	" "
2 Day Rooms	1,300	" "
Kitchen	400	" "
Control Office	350	" "
2 Waiting Rooms	225	" "

Medical & Psychiatric Clinic

Boys waiting	250	" "
Girls waiting	250	" "
4 Doctors offices...	480	" "
Laboratory, X-Ray & Storage Rooms.	600	" "
4 examination rooms	600	" "
Nurses station	100	" "
Conference Room & Library.	150	" "
Toilets	250	" "
Medical Records	5,700	" "
General Offices	1,200	" "

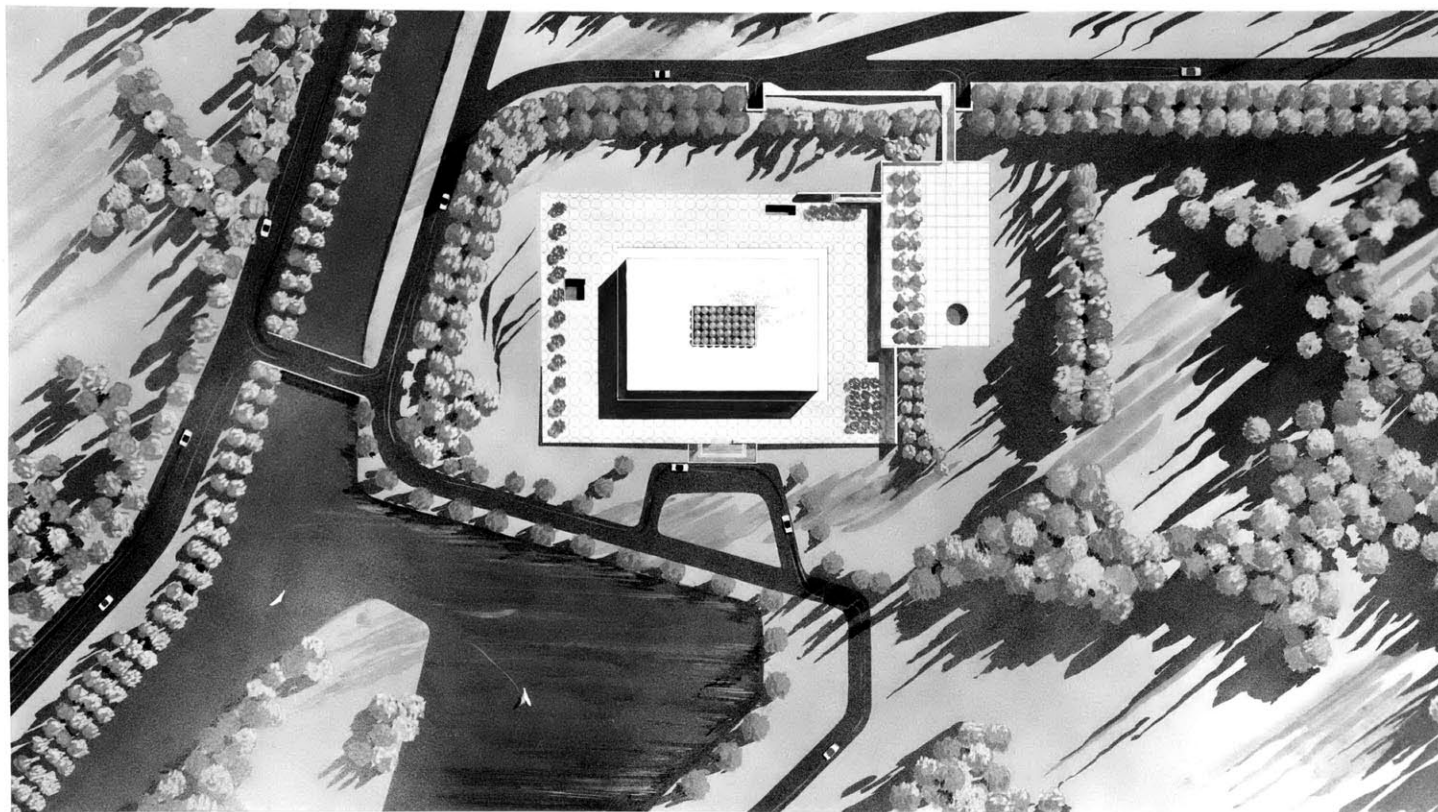
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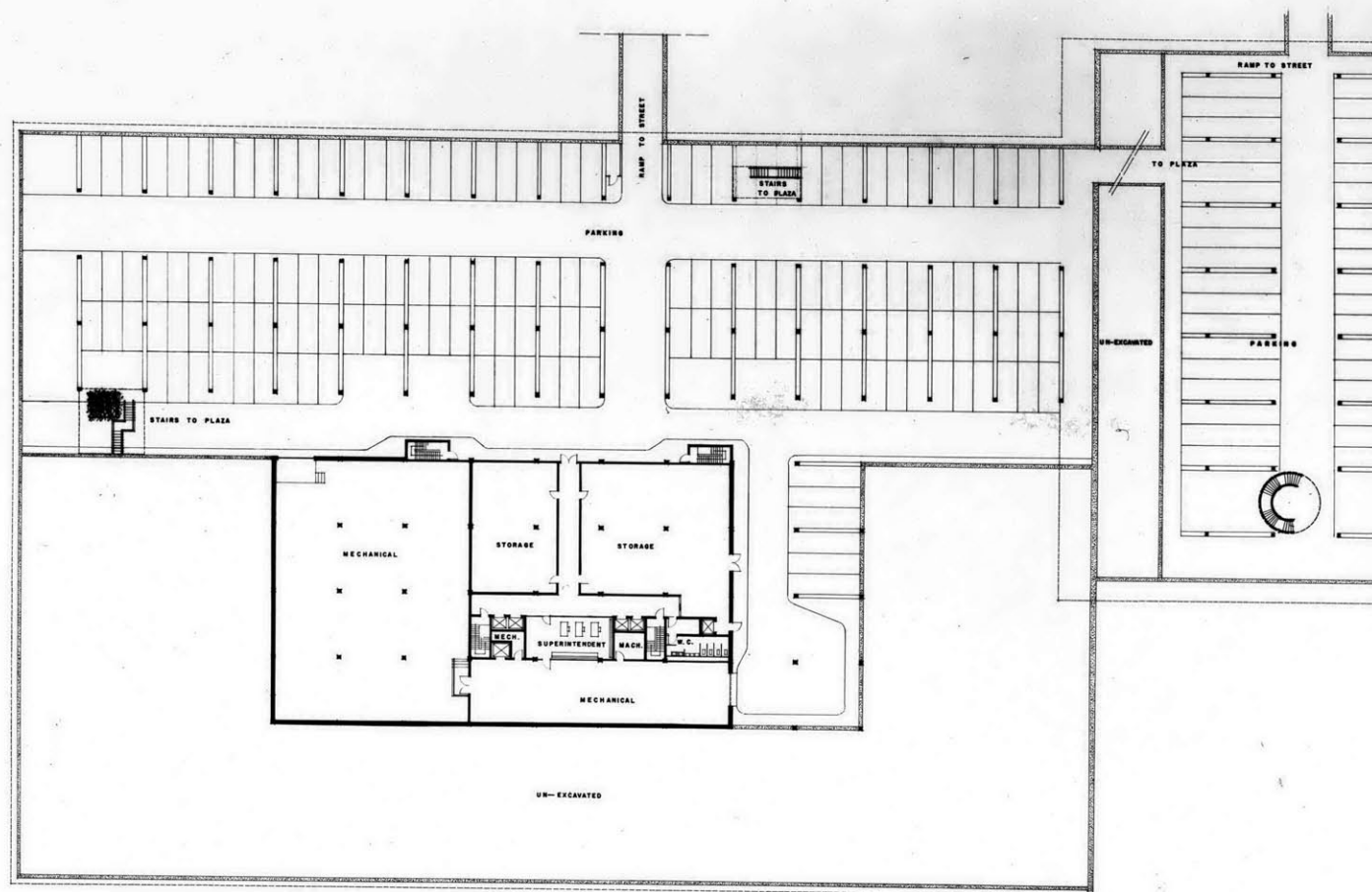


COURT AND RECORDS BUILDING

MUNICIPAL CENTER—PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND



M. ARCH. THESIS M.I.T.
ARTHUR R. KLAESON — AUGUST 1958

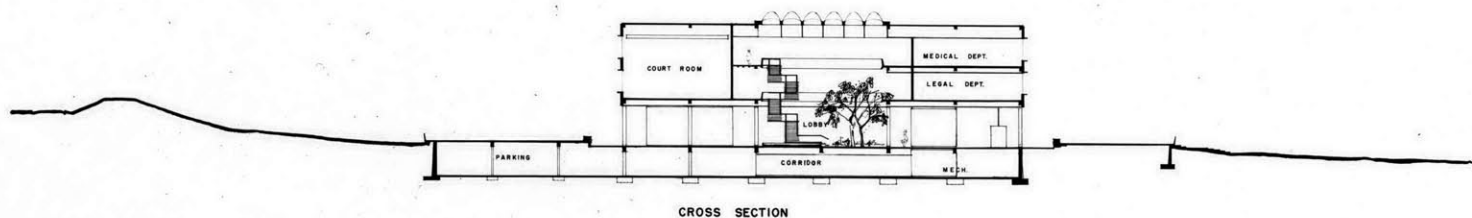
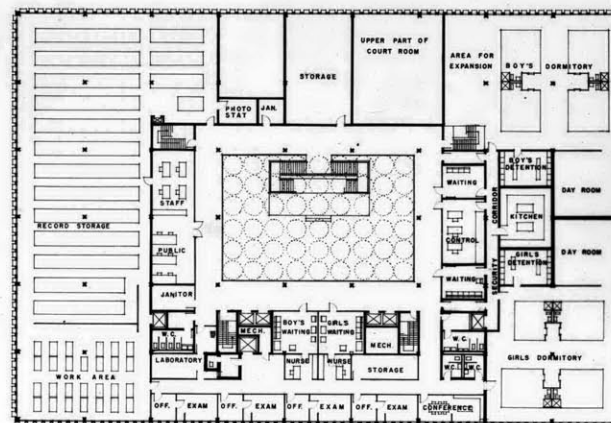
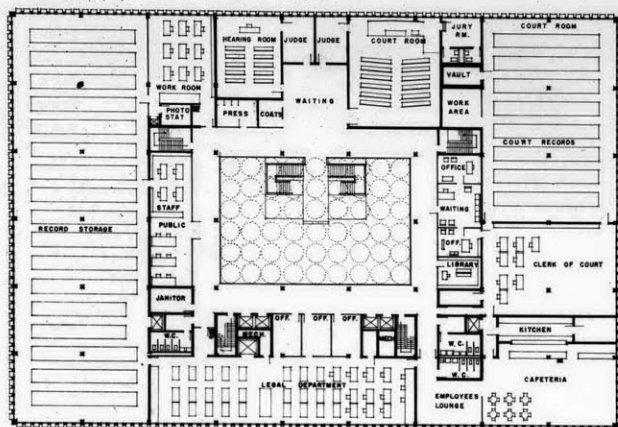


BASEMENT PLAN

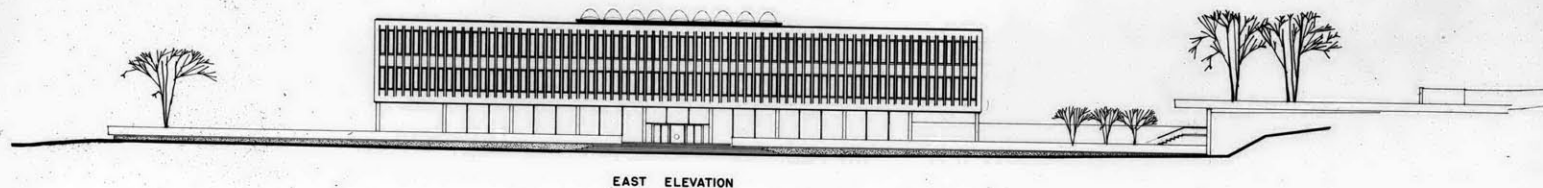
SCALE 1/16" = 1' - 0"



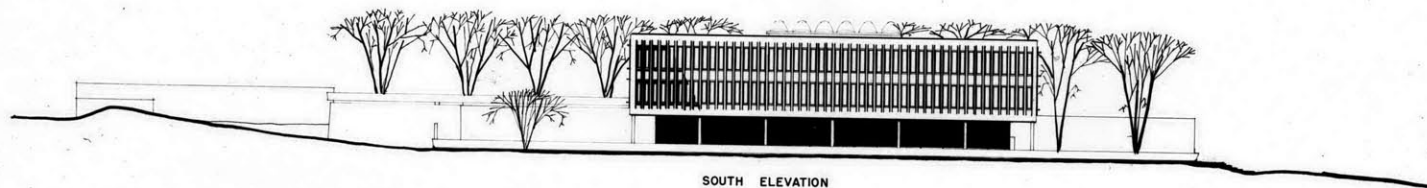
M. ARCH. THESIS M.I.T.
A. KLAESON — AUGUST 1988



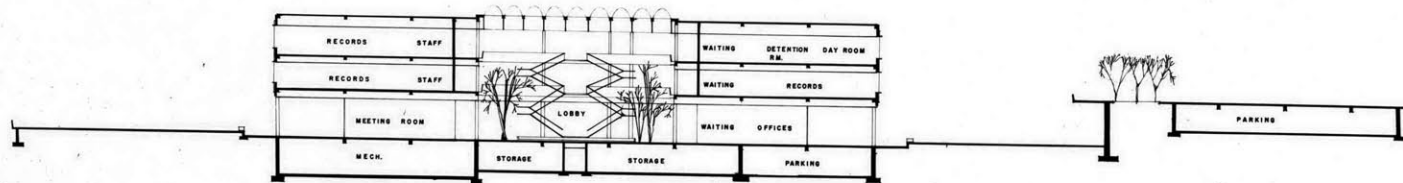
SCALE OF DRAWINGS 1/16" = 1'-0"



EAST ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION



TRANSVERSE SECTION

SCALE OF DRAWINGS 1/16" = 1'-0"

M. ARCH. THESIS MIT.
A. KLAESON — AUGUST 1958